BUSINESS EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROWTH IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND A WAY FORWARD

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Abstract
A laudable Nigerian Educational Policy is highly rated in the development plan as an instrument for change. Business Education as an aspect of total educational programme is a brain child for Socio-economic growth and development. The objectives of the programme as stated in the new national Policy on education have raised the hope of so many towards change and sustainable socio-economic growth in the country. Unfortunately, the programme is beset with lots of challenges that make it difficult to achieve its goals. This paper discusses the concept of business education, objectives of business education, business education as a tool for sustainable socio-economic growth. The paper also looks at the challenges of business education to Socio-economic growth in the country and strategies for overcoming the challenges. Conclusions and recommendations were also drawn.

Key Words: Business Education, Social and Economic Development, Challenges.

Introduction
Business education is an essential tool for socio-economic development. The programme is geared towards equipping individuals with the needed skills, knowledge, competences and attitudes that will make them be functional and productive citizens of the country. People all over the globe are aware that Nigerian economic system are not sustainable since our educational practices are not skill oriented. The introduction of business education in the school curriculum raised the minds of so many for sustainable socio-economic development. The laudable programme unfortunately is not fully implemented due to some challenges besetting our educational system. The half baked implementation crippled the objectives of the programme towards socio-economic growth. On the other hand, the white collar job syndrome for Nigerians has discouraged the socio-economic opportunities of our youths towards work oriented programmes. Business education if properly planned and implemented will achieve its goal of producing competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. This in turn will bring about socio-economic development in the country.

Concept of Business Education
Business education is an aspect of vocational education programmes which aimed at training individuals to acquire practical skills, knowledge, competences and attitudes needed to perform effectively in office occupation and in the business world. Ulinfun (1983) defined business education as education for business or training in business skills which are required for use in business offices and clerical occupations and business policy analysis.

Adedeji (2009) advocated that business education provides manpower with requisite knowledge, skill and attitude for harnessing other resources for productive purpose, which will go a long way in improving or advancing the national economy. Ekpenyong (1995) viewed business education as education intended for all who need education at high school or post high school than for scientific and technical qualifications, to equip them with knowledge and skill for their work in any sector of economic activity, be it private or public. UNESCO in Egwuelu (1992) contended that business education is regarded as that aspect of educational process involving in addition to general education, the study of technology and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge related to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life.
Okwuanaso and Nwazor (2000) viewed business education as a means by which someone not formally educated in business concepts and practices can learn how to plan, organize, file, type, budget, initiate, control, invest and save. It provides knowledge about general business activities in the country as well as skills, attitudes and competences for effective participation in such act as producers and consumers. From the aforementioned, business education is highly encompassing and the knowledge of it is very crucial to all professions which basically leads to the nations socio-economic development. Infact, business education enhance job creation and entrepreneurship development.

Objectives of Business Education

Business education is a programme of study offered from secondary to tertiary levels. The objectives of business education at secondary level, prepare students to develop and acquire the relevant skills and competences needed for employment as well as expose them to gain economic understanding in the world around them. According to Nwalado (2008), the objectives of business education at secondary school level include:

- To afford all students the pertinent information to enable them to explore and learn about the world of work and the relevant interest and career area of their choice.
- To help every student become an intelligent consumer of goods and services.
- To provide the students with the necessary occupational information to enable them to understand the various occupations found in the world of work.
- To provide training that will result in developing individuals who are well adjusted in the sense that they are capable of coping with the world in which they live and to provide the understanding and appreciation of the actual functioning of the economic system.
- To enable students to acquire saleable skills in the field of their choice.
- To help students prepare for, choose, enter into and progress satisfactorily in occupation of their choice.
- To train students in various business activities common to many professional, industrial, agricultural, distributive and home management occupation.
- To enable the students to realize the advantages of business courses within the university preparatory programmes.

The objectives of business education at tertiary level is for the purposes of occupational competences, job creation, poverty alleviation and for sustainable socio-economic development. Iwuanyanwu (1987), Okwuanaso and Nwazor (2000) highlighted the following objectives of business education at the tertiary level:

- To provide students opportunities to enhance the technical knowledge and business skills acquired, to real life situations.
- To prepare students to acquire an introduction to professional practice in business environments.
- To provide opportunity for students and the public to develop an understanding of the business and economic system of the nation so as to be efficient producers and consumers of goods and services.
- To provide students with business skills opportunities to recognize and play their role as productive participants or members of the society especially in a free enterprise economy.
- To prepare students for leadership positions both in private and public enterprise.
- To train students to be highly enterprising and self-reliant in the use of business skills.
- To have the ability to relate its activities to the social, cultural and economic needs of the country.

The above stated objectives have shown the enlightened citizens of any country that business education is a programme for sustainable socio-economic development, if adequately financed, planned and implemented.

Business Education for Socio-Economic Development

Business education is seen as an essential tool for achieving the nation’s socio-economic development. The introduction of the programme into the school curriculum is a step towards solving economical problems through employment generation. This is due to its entrepreneurial skill development which aim at producing individuals who are resourceful, functional and can contribute immensely towards the development of the society. Business education programme is charged with graduating students who are
well grounded in basic business principles, able to adapt, learn, and contribute to a variety of business settings, and possesses reasonable communication and problem solving skills. Aina (2002) contended that business education is concerned with development of individuals with personal skills and attitudes, communication and occupational skills, technological literacy, employability skills, broad specific occupational skills and knowledge. It prepares students to acquire required skills to be useful, an efficient employee, an entrepreneur and self reliant individual that contribute immensely to the nation’s socio-economic growth. Business education is generally referred to as education for and about business. Business education for business is that part of general education that trains individual for specific knowledge in accounting job, distributive and marketing job, computing job, ICT job, clerical and general office job. While business education about business refers to as any programme of study that offers individual general knowledge or understanding about use of money, marketing, economic or any other areas in business. This general knowledge is obtained at secondary school level where basic business fundamentals are being taught. The programme prepares students that would play effective role in the business life of the nation either as employers of labour, entrepreneurs or as employees. Amoore (2010) advocated that business education plays a significant role in economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the students, thereby enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. Business education is a key driver in any economy in any economy in the sense that it has the capability of producing competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators, businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. It prepares entrepreneurial minded people who embark on majority petty jobs as businessmen and women and later grow into self-reliant citizens that contribute effectively towards the nation’s social and economic development.

From the on going events, one can see that unemployment is one of the greatest crises facing Nigeria today. Business education in spite of its catalogue challenges contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of the nation as many of its products are engaged in different spheres of life as entrepreneurs, managers, insurers, bankers, accountants, marketers, secretaries, clerical officers, computer analysts, ICT operators and office managers. Business education is a key driver in the life of the nation either as employers of labour, entrepreneurs or as employees. Amoore (2010) advocated that business education plays a significant role in economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the students, thereby enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. Business education is a key driver in any economy in any economy in the sense that it has the capability of producing competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators, businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. It prepares entrepreneurial minded people who embark on majority petty jobs as businessmen and women and later grow into self-reliant citizens that contribute effectively towards the nation’s social and economic development.

Challenges of Business Education
Business education in Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges. These challenges include:

**Inadequate funding**
Over the years, inadequate funding has been a serious problem besetting proper implementation of business education programme. Subvention granted by government to institutions for running of highly capital intensive business education programme is grossly inadequate. In most institutions especially at secondary school level, the practical aspects of business education are taught theoretically. This is due to lack of fund to procure the equipment and facilities needed for the teaching of the practical aspect of business education. Njoku (2014) contended that the absence of funding does not only hamper implementation but also affect the quality of students produced, the operational mode of the institution, the attitude of teachers and infrastructural development of the institution.

**Poor curriculum content**
The curricula of business education in Nigerian institutions has some structural defect. The content of the curriculum is much far below what is expected in the field of work today. Most of the courses offered by business education students in our institutions of learning do not qualify them as experts in the present day technological offices. The curriculum need to be restructured and upgraded to meet up with the challenges in the modern day offices. Aina (2002) contended that the products of a deficient curriculum cannot function effectively and efficiently in the present day sophisticated technological offices. Anyioku (2013) noted that there are wide gaps between what is studied in Nigerian tertiary institutions and the requirements of the industries in today’s office organizations. Oladunjoye (2015) observed that business education curriculum in Nigerian universities are not comprehensive enough to include Microsoft Excel, database management, basic computer networking, desktop publishing, web page design etc which are highly needed in current offices.
Lack of qualified personnel:
There are lack of qualified business education teachers to handle education courses especially ICT related courses. Most of the lecturers and teachers of business education today are those trained with old curriculum. Business educators should be a master in their teaching subjects and teach them authoritatively that the students should acquire the needed skills necessary for effective performance in the field of work.

Poor facilities
Most of our institutions of learning offering business education programme are inadequately equipped with the necessary facilities needed for effective running of the programme. Anioke (2013) contended that the problem of business education in Nigeria is that most schools lack modern teaching facilities, laboratories, workshops and instructional facilities to impact the knowledge and skills needed. In some institutions where the facilities are available, they are grossly inadequate.

Way Forward
Business education is foundation for any nation’s socio-economic development. The main goal of business education is to train individuals with functional skills, knowledge, competences and abilities that will make him/her be productive, efficient and self reliant in the society he/she lives. For proper training of business education students and for the nation to achieve its economic development, educational institutions should join the government to sponsor education through partnership with industries, private organization, non-governmental organization, philanthropist and foreign aids. This will improve the funding of our education industry.

On the other, there is need to restructure the current curriculum in Nigerian Universities. The curriculum should be made more functional and comprehensive enough to integrate the multifaceted discipline of business education to be in line with current technological innovations in different sectors of the economy. According to Maduabuchi (2009), the future of business education curriculum should:
- Be competency based
- Critical and be able to inculcate problem solving skills in the business education graduates
- Incorporate practical work training and self-reliance
- Incorporate ICT based teaching and learning approach

Deficient business education curriculum that are used in many Nigerian universities today should be updated to include Microsoft Excel, database management, basic computer networking, desktop publishing, web design etc. which will enable the graduates of business education meet up with current innovations in the business world.

Government and Educational institutions should embark on retraining of teachers/lecturers that are trained in the old technological dispensation. Lecturers with current innovative skills should be made available to train students.

Education being capital intensive require provision of enough fund for the procurement of adequate facilities. No institution can boast of effective production of efficient and resourceful graduates without adequate provision of facilities.

Conclusion
This paper has analysed and examined business education as a tool for socio-economic growth and development. Business education is very crucial in all sectors of the economy. The poor implementation has deterred the programme from achieving its goal of equipping the individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge and competences needed to work effectively and efficiently in different facets of the economy as accountants, administrators, managers, secretaries, computer analysts, marketers and entrepreneurs, which are the bedrock of any nation’s socio-economic growth. The programme if adequately implemented will lead a country to a greater height of achieving its social and economic development.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are proffered for effective business education to achieve its goal of national growth:
1. Government should provide enough fund for proper running of different programmes in educational institutions.
2. Government in conjunction with institutions of higher learning through sponsorship and partnership with industries, NGOs and philanthropists should provide adequate facilities for effective training of students.
3. Education administrators and curriculum planners should ensure that business education curriculum is reviewed putting into consideration current innovations in the business world.
4. Government and education authorities should ensure that teachers/lecturers trained under the old technological dispensation are retrained through constant workshops, seminars and conferences.

References


